

## **Istook Reintroduces Religious Freedom Amendment**

*Washington, D.C.* - Today Rep. Ernest Istook (R-Okla.) and more than 50 House cosponsors reintroduced the Religious Freedom Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. At a pro-family rally accompanied by ten gospel choirs, over one hundred inner city pastors presented petitions calling for voluntary school prayer and religious freedom in public schools. The proposed constitutional amendment would permit but not mandate school prayer and other religious expression on public property. The proposed text (71 words), reads:

**To secure the people's right to acknowledge God according to the dictates of conscience: Neither the United States nor any State shall establish any official religion, but the people's right to pray and to recognize their religious beliefs, heritage or traditions on public property, including schools, shall not be infringed. Neither the United States nor any State shall require any person to join in prayer or other religious activity, prescribe school prayers, discriminate against religion, or deny equal access to a benefit on account of religion.**

**"There is widespread momentum in the House and across the nation for the protection of religious freedom, especially in our public schools,"** stated Istook. **"Thirty years of public opinion polls show that more than 75% of Americans support a constitutional amendment to protect voluntary school prayer. Now, more than ever, we need to protect Americans' rights to express their belief in God and to pray on public property."**

**"Under the guise of promoting tolerance, religious expression is being singled out for censorship,"** added Istook. **"The Supreme Court has broadened Americans' First Amendment free speech rights in many controversial ways, but it has pushed back our free speech rights when it involves religion. We wouldn't need a constitutional amendment, except that un-elected judges have changed the Constitution for us, by-passing the public and its elected representatives. This is our only way to change it back; it's our peaceful answer to the religious intolerance shown by activists who constantly sue to suppress religious expression."**

A constitutional amendment must pass by two-thirds in the House and Senate, and then be ratified by three-fourths of the nation's 50 states, with no approval or other role involving the President or the Governors.

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For more information, see our website: <http://religiousfreedom.house.gov>